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Page: 1

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B6, B1, 1.4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ7731

PAGE 01 CARACA 00852 01 OF 05 201318Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	IM-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	LAB-01
	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00
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R 201216Z MAR 98
 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0151
 INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 AMEMBASSY QUITO
 AMEMBASSY LIMA
 AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
 AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL
 CIA WASHDC
 DIA WASHDC
 USIA WASHDC 1481
 USDOC WASHDC 2697

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 CARACAS 000852

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/2/08
 TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ECON, EFIN, VE
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 00852 01 OF 05 201318Z
 SUBJECT: WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN: A VENEZUELAN CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK,
 ISSUE 2 (MARCH 2-16)

REFS: CARACAS 0599

CLASSIFIED BY [REDACTED] POLITICAL COUNSELOR. REASON: B6
 1.5(D).

 WELCOME TO OUR CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
 CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 19 MAR 2018
 DATE/CASE ID: 14 JUL 2009 200503654

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 CONFIDENTIAL

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Page

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

n/a

Page: 2

1. (U) THIS IS THE SECOND IN A BIWEEKLY SERIES OF REPORTS ON VENEZUELA'S 1998 ELECTIONS. DIVIDED INTO THREE SECTIONS--CAMPAIGN NEWS TICKER, VIGNETTES, AND HIGH-FLYERS AND BOTTOM-FEEDERS--WE HOPE TO USE THIS NOTEBOOK TO BRING YOU BREAKING NEWS, RUMORS AND INSIDER GOSSIP, AND PROFILES OF THE MANY POLITICAL HANDLERS, CAMPAIGN WORKERS, AND POLITICIANS WHO WILL MAKE THIS ELECTION HAPPEN. THIS NOTEBOOK IS DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT OUR REGULAR POLITICAL REPORTING ON THE ELECTIONS, PROVIDING YOU A GLIMPSE OF THE "OFF CAMERA" POLITICS WHICH WILL NOT APPEAR ELSEWHERE.

CAMPAIGN NEWS TICKER

-- (U) VOTER REGISTRATION FOR THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS BEGINS ON APRIL FOOLS' DAY.

-- (U) THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEN) MET MARCH 13 AND DECIDED THAT AD'S PRESIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 CARACA 00852 01 OF 05 201318Z
CANDIDATE WILL BE DECIDED BY CONSENSUS. THE DECISION, MADE BY AD'S 25 SECTIONAL SECRETARIES GENERAL, IS SEEN AS GUARANTEEING THAT PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL LUIS ALFARO WILL BE THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. THE DECISION WAS MADE DURING A LUNCH AT THE HATO GRILL--A RESTAURANT IN LOS CAOBOS NEAR AD HEADQUARTERS--AND THEN RATIFIED AT THE ANAUCO HILTON, WHERE ALL THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP HAD GATHERED. THE CEN WILL MEET AGAIN AFTER HOLY WEEK TO AMEND INTERNAL PARTY REGULATIONS TO ELIMINATE THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE CANDIDATE BE CHOSEN BY A PARTY PRIMARY ELECTION.

-- (U) ALFARO LAUNCHED HIS CAMPAIGN, ALBEIT STILL AN UNOFFICIAL CAMPAIGN, BY CALLING FOR A "NATIONAL ACCORD" AMONG ALL MAJOR PARTIES AND CANDIDATES TO PURSUE A COMMON PROGRAM OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT. THIS CALL WAS IMMEDIATELY REJECTED BY CLAUDIO FERMIN, WHO SAID ALFARO WAS TRYING TO "DIRECT ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE PRESENT SO THAT AD IS NOT CALLED TO ACCOUNT." THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY (COPEI) ALSO REJECTED THAT IDEA. COPEI SECRETARY GENERAL DONALD RAMIREZ SAID, "THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR A NATIONAL ACCORD. EVERYONE IN GOVERNMENT IS PACKING THEIR BAGS AND GETTING READY TO LEAVE. THE TIME TO CALL FOR A NATIONAL ACCORD IS AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER, AND THE WINNER OF THE ELECTIONS SHOULD MAKE THE CALL."

-- (U) COPEI'S EXPANDED NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DECIDED MARCH 13 TO CHOOSE ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE THROUGH A "SECRET BALLOT" OF 1,800 REGIONAL DELEGATES AT AN EXTRAORDINARY NATIONAL

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Pag»

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CONFIDENTIAL
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Page: 3

CONVENTION WHOSE ONLY PURPOSE WILL BE THE SELECTION OF THE PARTY'S CANDIDATE.

-- (U) THE HOMELAND FOR ALL PARTY (PPT) DECLARED ITS SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HUGO CHAVEZ. THE PPT ANNOUNCED THAT ITS
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PAGE 04 CARACA 00852 01 OF 05 201318Z
SUPPORT FOR CHAVEZ'S CANDIDACY DID NOT EXTEND TO CHAVEZ'S CALL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY, NOR DID IT IMPLY SUPPORT FOR ANY CANDIDATE WHO MIGHT APPEAR ON THE ELECTORAL LIST OF CHAVEZ'S PARTY, THE MOVEMENT FOR A FIFTH REPUBLIC (MVR).

-- (U) RAFAEL PARRA PEREZ, IN HIS FIRST INTERVIEW FOLLOWING HIS ASSUMPTION OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CNE) AFTER THE SUDDEN DEATH OF JUSTO PASTOR FERNANDEZ, SAID, "POLITICAL PARTIES WILL NOT CONTROL THE CNE." AS IF TO UNDERSCORE THAT POINT, CNE FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT MIRIAM KORNBLITH ALSO GAVE A PUBLIC INTERVIEW PROCLAIMING HER POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE AND DECLARING THAT THE CNE "IS NOT ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PARTIES, BUT TO THE PEOPLE."

VIGNETTES

B1

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ7739

PAGE 01 CARACA 00852 02 OF 05 201319Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
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	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00
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Page: 4

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0152
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 1482
USDOC WASHDC 2698

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 05 CARACAS 000852

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/2/08
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CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 00852 02 OF 05 201319Z
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ISSUE 2 (MARCH 2-16)

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B1

3. (U) IN A MARCH 2 INTERVIEW, ANDUEZA SAID THERE ARE GROUPS IN VENEZUELA WHICH "ASPIRE" TO A COUP AND ARE BEHIND THE EFFORT "TO POLARIZE" THE ELECTIONS BETWEEN HUGO CHAVEZ AND IRENE SAEZ. WHEN ASKED WHO HE WAS REFERRING TO, ANDUEZA SAID, "CHAVEZ." HE SAID CHAVEZ'S "THREAT" TO DISSOLVE THE CONGRESS AND HIS DECLARATION THAT HE WILL "DEFEND" THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS ARE DESIGNED "TO CREATE WORRY AND ANXIETY." HE CRITICIZED CHAVEZ FOR SAYING HE IS GOING TO WIN THE ELECTIONS AND WILL NOT LET ANYONE STEAL HIS VICTORY. ANDUEZA SAID, "THIS IS AN ATTITUDE THAT MERITS CONCERN, SINCE HE IS NOT EVEN IN FIRST PLACE IN THE POLLS." ANDUEZA CONTINUED, "IN THIS COUNTRY THERE IS NO PRECEDENT OF ANYONE WHO HAS NOT RESPECTED THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS."

4. (U) CHAVEZ RESPONDED TO ANDUEZA'S ALLEGATIONS BY CALLING THEM "PART OF A DIRTY WAR" AGAINST HIS CANDIDACY, "COOKED IN THE LABORATORIES OF AD AND COPEI."

FOLLOWED BY FERMIN

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CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

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CONFIDENTIAL

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Page: 5

5. (C) CLAUDIO [REDACTED] WAS GOING TO "COME OUT OF MY CORNER" AND "TAKE ON CHAVEZ." HE DID JUST THAT ON MARCH 8 WHEN HE DEBATED CHAVEZ ON THE GLOBOVISION TELEVISION STATION. THE 10:00 P.M. TIME SLOT WAS NOT IDEAL, BUT THE DEBATE CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF THE PRESS AND COMMENTATORS. FERMIN WANTED TO USE THE DEBATE TO CONTRAST WHAT HE CALLS "THE CHOICE FACING VENEZUELA BETWEEN

CONFIDENTIAL

B1

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 00852 02 OF 05 201319Z
 BANALITY (IRENE), VIOLENCE (CHAVEZ), AND SOCIAL ACTION (FERMIN). HE ALSO WANTED TO PUSH CHAVEZ ON HIS ROLE IN THE FAILED 1992 COUP AND HIS CALL FOR DISSOLUTION OF THE CONGRESS AND REFORM OF THE CONSTITUTION.

6. (U) FERMIN TIMED HIS PUNCHES WELL, AND DREW CHAVEZ OUT ON SOME KEY ISSUES. IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION, "WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE PRESIDENT," CHAVEZ RESPONDED, "I BELIEVE THAT HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAS SHOULD BE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC FOR THE SIMPLE FACT OF WHAT I EMBODY." IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION, "HOW WOULD YOU TRANSFORM THE STATE?", CHAVEZ SAID, "IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF ADMINISTRATION, IT IS A QUESTION OF A SYSTEM THAT HAS COLLAPSED; HERE ONE HAS TO TRANSFORM THE POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE STATE IS FINISHED AND THE REPUBLIC IS FINISHED. THERE IS ONLY ONE THING TO DO, AND THAT IS NOT ADMINISTRATION, ONE HAS TO TRANSFORM THE SYSTEM BY MEANS OF A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY." WHEN ASKED, "IS THERE ANY POSSIBILITY OF A RETURN TO VIOLENCE?", CHAVEZ SAID, "I AFFIRM BEFORE LATIN AMERICA AND VENEZUELA THAT WE COMMITTED A VIOLENT ACT (THE 1992 COUP ATTEMPT) OUT OF HISTORICAL NECESSITY. I HOPE THAT WE DO NOT HAVE TO RETURN TO ARMS, BUT AS FOR VIOLENCE, AS YOU KNOW, AS THE BIBLE SAYS, AND AS THE PEOPLE KNOW, JUSTICE IS THE ONLY PATH TO PEACE." WHEN ASKED, "WHAT DO YOU THINK OF AGENDA VENEZUELA?", CHAVEZ SAID, "WE ARE PROPOSING THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ECONOMIC MODEL, FROM A MODEL OF SAVAGE CAPITALISM AND NEOLIBERALISM TO A MODEL OF REAL HUMANISM, A MIXED MODEL, AN INTEGRAL MODEL THAT WILL FOSTER NATIONAL PRODUCTION."

7. (U) A "FLASH POLL" TAKEN IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DEBATE SHOWED THAT 50 PERCENT OF VIEWERS THOUGHT FERMIN WON THE DEBATE, WHILE ONLY 19 PERCENT THOUGHT CHAVEZ WON THE DEBATE. THE REMAINING 31 PERCENT COULD NOT IDENTIFY A CLEAR WINNER. WHILE THIS POLL WAS A

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PAGE 04 CARACA 00852 02 OF 05 201319Z
 COMFORT TO CLAUDIO, A DEEPER LOOK AT THE RESULTS INDICATES THAT PERCEPTIONS WERE DRIVEN BY CLASS AS MUCH AS THE DEBATE ITSELF. OF THE FIVE SOCIAL CLASSES IDENTIFIED BY THE POLLSTERS--A, B, C, D, AND

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CONFIDENTIAL

Page 5

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

n/a

Page: 6

E, MOVING FROM UPPER CLASS TO LOWER CLASS--FERMIN EASILY WON THE DEBATE IN THE OPINION OF VIEWERS OF CLASSES A, B, AND C. FERMIN ALSO WON THE DEBATE AMONG VIEWERS OF SOCIAL CLASS D, BUT BY A SLIMMER MARGIN. HOWEVER, AMONG VIEWERS OF CLASS E, THE LOWEST SOCIAL CLASS, CHAVEZ WON THE DEBATE. THIS RESULT, ACCORDING TO THE POLLSTERS, INDICATES THAT "THE AGGRESSIVE PROFILE OF CHAVEZ IS DEFINITELY NOT LIKED BY THE HIGH AND MIDDLE CLASSES, EVEN THOUGH IN OTHER SOCIAL CLASSES HIS DISCOURSE HAS RESONANCE."

WHAT VENEZUELANS REALLY WANT: SOFT AUTHORITARIANISM

8. (U) A "VALUES" POLL DONE BY VENECONOMY AND CONSULTORES 21, A WELL-KNOWN COMBINED EFFORT BY TOBY BOTTOME AND ALFREDO KELLER, INDICATES THAT DEMOCRACY IS STILL THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF CHOICE OF MOST VENEZUELANS, BUT THAT IF THEY COULD CHOOSE ANY LATIN AMERICAN LEADER TO BE THEIR PRESIDENT, PERU'S ALBERTO FUJIMORI WOULD BE THEIR FIRST CHOICE.

9. (U) ACCORDING TO THE POLL RESULTS:

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PAGE 01 CARACA 00852 03 OF 05 201319Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
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	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	LAB-01	L-01
	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00
	T-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04	G-00	FDIC-01	SAS-00

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R 201216Z MAR 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0153
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

n/a

Page: 7

USIA WASHDC 1483
USDOC WASHDC 2699

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 05 CARACAS 000852

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/2/08

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ECON, EFIN, VE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 00852 03 OF 05 201319Z

SUBJECT: WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN: A VENEZUELAN CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK,
ISSUE 2 (MARCH 2-16)

-- VENEZUELANS OVERWHELMINGLY BELIEVE THAT THE COUNTRY NEEDS A
STRONG LEADER.

-- THIS BELIEF IS FUELED BY VENEZUELAN PERCEPTIONS THAT
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN CORRUPTED BY POLITICAL PARTIES
AND POLITICIANS, AND THAT ONLY A STRONG LEADER CAN STAND UP TO THE
"BAD GUYS."

-- BELIEF IN THE CORRUPTION OF CIVILIAN INSTITUTIONS IS SO
PERVERSIVE THAT ACTIONS DIRECTED AGAINST THE INSTITUTIONS
THEMSELVES--SUCH AS DISSOLVING THE CONGRESS--ARE POPULAR WITH MANY
VENEZUELANS. ACCORDING TO THE POLL, 66 PERCENT OF VENEZUELANS AGREE
THAT CONGRESS SHOULD BE DISSOLVED, 64 PERCENT THAT POLITICAL
PARTIES SHOULD BE CENSURED, 56 PERCENT THAT THE ARMED FORCES SHOULD
BE GIVEN A DIRECT ROLE IN GOVERNMENT, AND 51 PERCENT THAT THE
JUDICIARY SHOULD BE DISMANTLED.

-- FOR MOST VENEZUELANS, THE BASELINE OF DEMOCRACY IS THE 1958
PUNTO FIJO AGREEMENT WHICH CREATED A POLITICAL SYSTEM TO SHARE AND
DISTRIBUTE THE WEALTH AND RESOURCES OF THE COUNTRY. THE POLITICAL
AND ECONOMIC TURMOIL OF THE 90S HAS UNDERMINED THIS MODEL. ABSENT
THE "DEMOCRATIC FACTS" OF SHARED WEALTH, VENEZUELANS ARE LESS
INCLINED TO SUPPORT "DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS" SUCH AS THE CONGRESS,
JUDICIARY, AND POLITICAL PARTIES.

-- THIS BELIEF IN A NEED FOR A STRONG LEADER DOES NOT TRANSLATE
INTO SUPPORT FOR ANY SPECIFIC CANDIDATE. EIGHTY-FOUR PERCENT OF
THOSE QUESTIONED SAID NO CURRENT CANDIDATE FITS THE PROFILE OF A
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PAGE 03 CARACA 00852 03 OF 05 201319Z
STRONG LEADER. OF THE 16 PERCENT WHO DID IDENTIFY A CURRENT
PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER, SEVEN PERCENT NAMED CHAVEZ, WHILE THE

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Pag»

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REMAINING NINE PERCENT WERE SPLIT BETWEEN IRENE SAEZ, CLAUDIO FERMIN, EDUARDO FERNANDEZ, ANDRES VELASQUEZ, FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, AND FORMER DICTATOR PEREZ JIMENEZ.

-- BELIEF IN A STRONG LEADER IS ALSO VALID ONLY IN SO FAR AS THAT STRONG LEADER TAKES ACTION AGAINST "BAD GUYS." VENEZUELAN S WILL NOT TOLERATE ACTIONS AGAINST THEMSELVES OF THEIR PERCEIVED RIGHTS, SUCH AS CURTAILING FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION, FREEDOM TO TRAVEL, AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR DISREGARDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALLEGED CRIMINALS. IN SHORT, VENEZUELAN S WANT WHAT BOTTOME AND KELLER CALL "SOFT AUTHORITARIANISM" WHICH TACKLES TOUGH POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHILE LEAVING CIVIL LIBERTIES AND FREEDOMS UNTOUCHED.

B1

THE REAL POLITICAL SURVEY

11. (U) TRACKING SURVEY RESULTS IS THE LATEST AND MOST OBSESSIVE POLITICAL SPORT IN VENEZUELA. IN AN EFFORT TO MEET THIS DEMAND TO KNOW WHO IS UP AND WHO IS DOWN IN THE POLLS, SURVEY GROUPS NOW COMPETE FOR PUBLIC ATTENTION AND NEWSPAPER SPACE. ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL HAS BEEN CVI, A NEW GROUP OF POLLSTERS WHO MOVED INTO THE CARACAS MARKET FROM PERU. CVI DOES WEEKLY SURVEYS IN CARACAS, WHICH GIVES THEM AN EDGE ON OTHER POLLSTERS WHO DO BI-WEEKLY OR

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PAGE 04 CARACA 00852 03 OF 05 201319Z
MONTHLY POLLING. IN THE PROCESS OF TRACKING POLLS, LITTLE ATTENTION IS PAID TO THE VASTLY DIFFERENT METHODOLOGIES, SURVEY SAMPLE SIZES, AND PLACES OF SAMPLING USED BY THE DIFFERENT COMPANIES. WE, HOWEVER, CAME ACROSS A POLLING COMPANY WHICH WE THINK HAS CHOSEN A NOVEL AND POTENTIALLY USEFUL POLLING TECHNIQUE. THE COMPANY, MARRERO AND ASSOCIATES, RECENTLY DID A MONTH-LONG POLL (FEBRUARY 2-MARCH 2, 1998) OF 1,524 RESIDENTS OF CARACAS. MARRERO AND ASSOCIATES ASKED EACH MEMBER OF THE SAMPLE A SINGLE QUESTION: "IF YOU HAD ONLY ONE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE THE FINGER TO A FAMOUS PERSONALITY OR ORGANIZATION, WHO WOULD IT BE?"

12. (U) THE RESULTS OF THIS IMPORTANT POLL ARE:

PERSONALITY/ENTITY	TOTAL	PERCENT
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CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

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CONFIDENTIAL

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Page: 9

RAFAEL CALDERA	210	13.8
DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY	207	13.6
POLITICIANS	182	11.9
EX-SPOUSE	121	7.9
COMMON CRIMINALS	107	7.0
BOSS	89	5.8
CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ	75	4.9
EX-LOVER	68	4.5

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ7749

PAGE 01 CARACA 00852 04 OF 05 201319Z
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	T-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-04	G-00	FDIC-01	SAS-00
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R 201216Z MAR 98
 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0154
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 AMEMBASSY QUITO
 AMEMBASSY LIMA
 AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
 AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL
 CIA WASHDC
 DIA WASHDC
 USIA WASHDC 1484
 USDOC WASHDC 2700

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 05 CARACAS 000852

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PAGE 02 CARACA 00852 04 OF 05 201319Z

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 CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

n/a

Page: 10

SUBJECT: WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN: A VENEZUELAN CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK,
ISSUE 2 (MARCH 2-16)

CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION	45	3.0
NAVEGANTE DE MAGALLANES		
(BASEBALL TEAM)	45	3.0
BILL CLINTON	42	2.7
CARACAS LIONS		
(BASEBALL TEAM)	38	2.5
SERVANDO AND FLORENTINO	36	2.4
(LOCAL SINGING GROUP)		
CECILIA MATOS	33	2.2
(CAP'S MISTRESS)		
SADDAM HUSSEIN	28	1.8
TEODORO PETKOFF	22	1.4
UGUETH URBINA	18	1.2
TRAFFIC COPS	18	1.2
HUGO CHAVEZ	17	1.1
IRENE SAEZ	16	1.0
BUS DRIVERS	16	1.0
MOTHER-IN-LAW	15	1.0
POLICE	13	0.9
POPEYE	12	0.8
DON'T KNOW	11	0.7
FATHER/MOTHER	11	0.7
GILBERTO CORREA	10	0.7
PABLO MEDINA	4	0.3
COLOMBIAN GUERRILLAS	2	0.1
CARMELO LAURIA	1	0.07
MARIETTA SANTANA	1	0.07
PRESIDENTIAL BODYGUARDS	1	0.07

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PAGE 03 CARACA 00852 04 OF 05 201319Z
FERNANDO CARRILLO 1 0.07

TOTAL 1,524 100.0

13. (U) AS FAR AS CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS IS CONCERNED,
ASTUTE READERS WILL NOTE THAT CHAVEZ AND IRENE ARE RUNNING NECK AND
NECK, WITH CHAVEZ AHEAD BY A FINGER.

HIGH FLYERS AND BOTTOM-FEEDERS

14. (C) IN EACH ISSUE OF OUR NOTEBOOK WE PROFILE FOR YOU ONE OF
THE MANY POLITICAL HANDLERS, CAMPAIGN MANAGERS, OR POLITICIANS WHO

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Pag»

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n/a

Page: 11

WILL MAKE THIS ELECTION HAPPEN. IN THE LAST ISSUE WE PROFILED TWO
"BOTTOM-FEEDERS." IN THIS ISSUE WE WOULD LIKE TO PROFILE ONE OF
THE "HIGH-FLYERS." OUR SUBJECT THIS ISSUE IS [REDACTED]

B1

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Pag»

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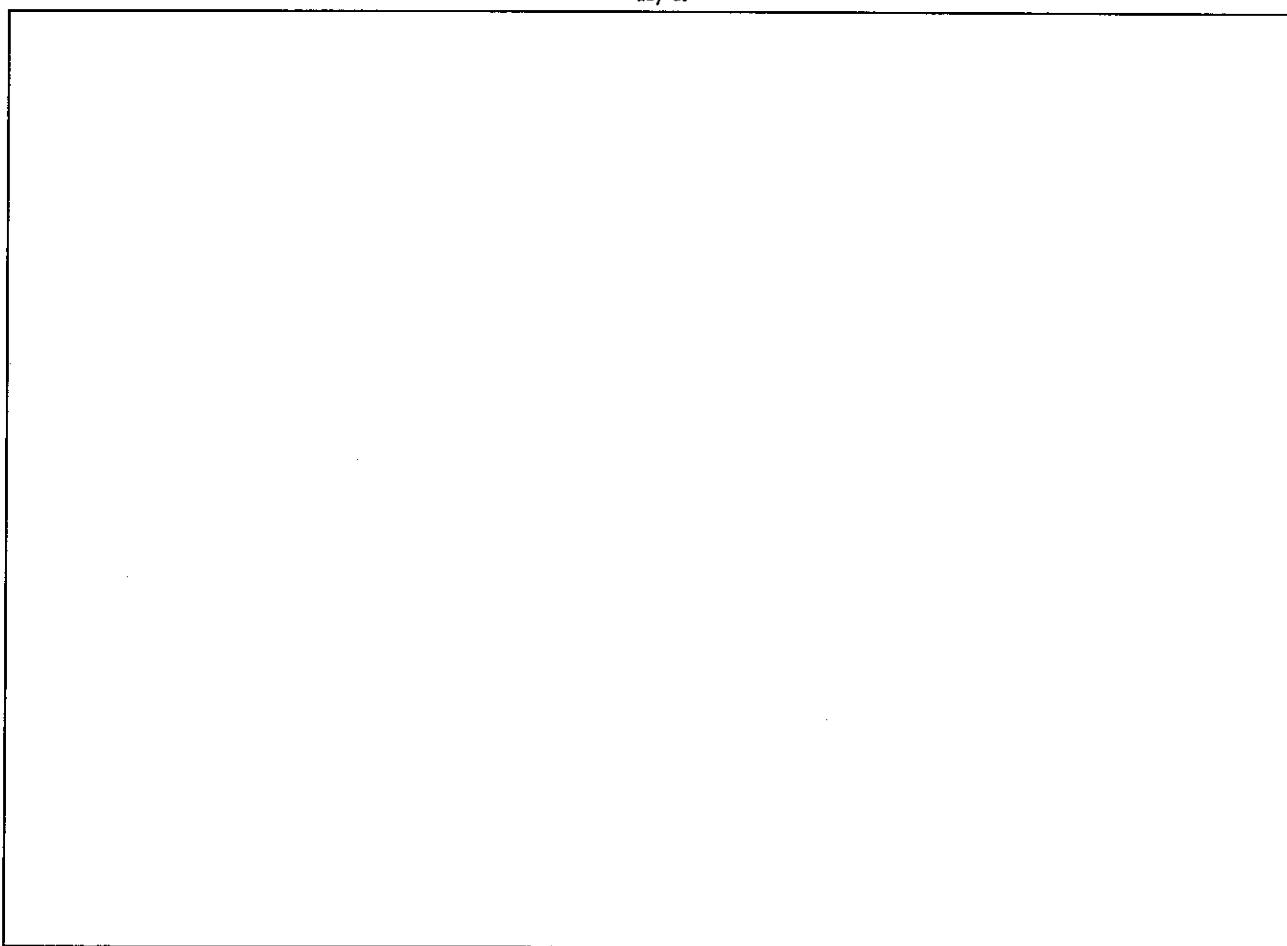
B1

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UNCLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL
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Page: 13

B1



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CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

Pag»

UNCLASSIFIED